

Bolivia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, but the government did not effectively enforce these provisions to protect all populations.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Nevertheless, societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was common, and government action to counter it was limited. Citizens are allowed to change their name and gender on their official identification cards, although the process was subject to significant delay and discrimination at the hands of judicial authorities. Credible LGBTI organizations reported that only seven persons had been able to complete the change since 2007. No hate crime laws aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. On August 18, President Evo Morales stated in a press conference, “I do not understand how women can marry women and men can marry men.” On November 16, the president stated that he hoped his health minister “is not a lesbian,” although the Ministry of Communication later issued an official apology on his behalf.

In March 2014 the Bolivian Coalition of LGBT Organizations (COALIBOL) announced the killings of 55 members of the LGBTI community between 2003 and 2013. A study presented by the NGO Hivos and COALIBOL in January 2014 found that 93 percent of surveyed LGBTI individuals had been the subject of discrimination from a police officer, prosecutor, or judge. The study also noted that of those surveyed, 82 percent knew of at least one person whom police had arbitrarily detained due to sexual orientation or gender identity. In the educational field, 70 percent of survey participants had been the subject of discrimination from teachers and 30 percent from fellow students. Since promulgation of the Law Against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination in 2010, the armed forces have prohibited ejection from the military because of sexual orientation. Nevertheless, reports of abuse within and expulsion from the armed services continued.

LGBTI persons faced discrimination in the work place, at school, and when seeking to access government services, especially in the area of health care. The transgender community remained particularly vulnerable to abuse and violence. COALIBOL reported that 72 percent of transgender individuals abandoned their secondary school studies due to intense discrimination. Transgender activists said a majority of the transgender community was forced to seek employment in the commercial sex sector because of discrimination in the job market and unwillingness on the behalf of employers to accept their credentials. There were no developments in the 2012 killing of transgender activist Luisa Duran, who was found dead in Santa Cruz with 52 stab wounds.

Elderly LGBTI persons faced high rates of discrimination when attempting to access health-care services, and there were no legal mechanisms in place to transfer power of attorney to a same-sex partner.